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TO: Giuseppe D' Alessandro DATE: March 21, 1995

FROM: Lauren Herman

SUBJECT: **V Wear Qualitative Research -- Final Report**

Attached is the final report for the V Wear Qualitative Research that was conducted on February 28th in Baltimore, MD and on March 1st and 2nd in Atlanta, GA. The objectives of this research were to explore the value of adding designer branding to the V Wear program, the relevance of specific designers to V Wear, and consumer interest in three conceptual extensions -- Home Accents, Crystal, and Cutting Edge. A total of fourteen triads were conducted among Virginia Slims smokers; eight of the triads included women with no V Wear redemption experience and the remaining six included women who have participated in V Wear.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall, these women felt that a designer name would provide no added value to the V Wear catalog. In general, they do not get excited about designers, and past redeemers already equate V Wear with quality.

In addition, most of these women had only minimal awareness of the designers explored. Of those examined, Liz Claiborne and Calvin Klein appeared to be the most appropriate for Virginia Slims because of their familiarity, accessibility, and perceived quality. The other designers were either unknown or had minimal awareness levels among these respondents. Those who were known were not seen as a good fit with Virginia Slims.

These smokers felt that extending the collection beyond clothing is a good idea. Not only would this give non-clothing orderers additional choices, it was perceived to be a natural extension of Virginia Slims brand imagery.

It should also be noted that these women see the V Wear catalog as a way to indulge themselves. Most of the women commented that when they are looking through the catalog, they are mainly looking for items for themselves.

Designer Proposition

V-Wear redeemers were relatively neutral about the designer proposition. This indifference was due largely to both their generally positive V Wear experiences and their concerns for minimizing UPC requirements. Also, these redeemers have continued to participate as a result of prior positive experience with the V Wear program. For most, the program succeeds by offering items that exhibit quality.

Concept response among non-redeemers was more varied. On a positive note, the addition of a designer name could add quality/credibility for those who had inferior quality expectations. It could also reduce branding concerns for those who anticipated excessive Virginia Slims branding. Negatively, the presence of a designer name could increase anticipated UPC requirements. Lastly, for those non-redeemers whose concerns with accurate sizing prevent active participation, the addition of a designer name appears to do nothing to reduce their resistance to ordering from the V Wear catalog.

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Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/jldn0004

Specific Designers

Given the limited role designers play in their daily shopping, most respondents had only minimal awareness of the designers investigated in this research. Of those designers probed, Liz Claiborne and Calvin Klein were seen as the most appropriate fit for Virginia Slims.

- Liz Claiborne was seen as a familiar designer of women's clothing, and accessibly upscale. Calvin Klein was also seen as an accessible and familiar designer but for both women's and men's clothing. Calvin Klein was also viewed as being less traditional than Liz Claiborne.
  - Both were viewed as designers of quality clothing.

- Anne Klein was viewed as a clothing designer primarily for the professional woman. Chanel was seen as an extremely upscale designer and more often associated with perfume. Ralph Lauren was believed to be more of a designer for men's clothing.

- There was minimal awareness of Donna Karan, Nicole Miller, Versace, Bill Blass, Willi Wear, Evan Picone and Oleg Cassini.

Program Evolution: Broadening V-Wear Offers

"Home Accents Collection"

(depicted frames, candles, bath oils, vases, pillows, etc.)

The reactions to this concept were consistently positive. These reactions were driven by the degree to which respondents were interested in housewares as treats for themselves or as gift items. Most were very interested in including these sorts of items in future V Wear mailings. However, a minority were less enthusiastic about the concept. For them, 'Home Accents' became too common or duplicative (they have enough of these kinds of things and just don't need anymore).

In terms of fit with Virginia Slims, most respondents viewed this collection as either consistent with current images or as an opportunity to broaden the dimension of the Virginia Slims woman.

"Crystal Collection"

(showed candlesticks, atomizer, ashtray, candy bowl, perfume bottle, etc.)

The responses to this concept were varied. Some respondents were very interested in crystal as a personal treat and/or a gift item. However, a significant portion of these respondents were less motivated by the concept. For them, the items depicted were too impractical, unattainable (high UPC expectations), or duplicative.

Most respondents had no trouble associating these sorts of items with Virginia Slims, the image being elegance and sophistication. However, while not necessarily an inconsistent image for Virginia Slims, a crystal collection was often viewed as a surprising departure.

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Source: https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/docs/jldn0004

"Cutting Edge Collection"

(showed a travel bag, electronic rolodex, telephone, pens and camera)

This concept was harder for respondents to interpret. Respondents typically interpreted the items represented as a resource for the busy woman of the 90's, a woman who likes 'cutting edge' technology and/or practical things for the house. Some of these women were interested in these kinds of items because they saw them as practical and/or unusual. On the other hand, many felt they were not likely to save UPC's for most of the items because they felt they would have high UPC requirements, were too practical and/or risky for a catalog purchase.

Overall, the concept worked best when viewed as characteristic of the life of the '90's woman on the go.' It was not perceived to extend the Virginia Slims image of femininity which these smokers were so familiar with and it was said that the concept overstated the 'professional' look of the Virginia Slims persona.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Most respondents were ultimately neutral about a proposition offering designer branding to the collection -- imitations play a much larger role in their lives than actual designer labels. Therefore, the addition of a designer name to the V Wear catalog would provide little, if any, added value.

Based on this research, adding non-clothing items to the collection could broaden V Wear's appeal while also building on general Virginia Slims imagery. However, reactions to the three concepts revealed that the actual presentation of the items will be critical in determining the extent of their impact on current Virginia Slims imagery.

Attachment

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